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**U.S. Department of the Interior**

National Trails Intermountain  
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## **National Trails Intermountain Region News Release**

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### **President Signs Bill Expanding Trail of Tears National Historic Trail**

The Trail of Tears National Historic Trail gained 2,845 miles, more than doubling in size, when President Barack Obama signed the Omnibus Public Lands Management Act on March 30.

The Trail of Tears National Historic Trail commemorates the forced relocation of American Indian people from their ancestral homelands in the Southeast to Indian Territory (present-day Oklahoma) in 1838-39. Only the best-documented routes followed by Cherokee groups were included when the national historic trail was established by Congress in 1987. Other potential trail segments were omitted because little was known at that time about their historic location and use. A 2007 National Park Service feasibility study re-examined those routes in light of new information and determined that most are, in fact, original, well-documented and important components of the Trail of Tears.

Those study segments, as well as associated round-up forts and campgrounds, were added to the existing national historic trail under the Trail of Tears Documentation Act, part of the newly-passed Public Lands Bill. Included are many short trail segments from collection forts in Georgia, North Carolina, Alabama, and Tennessee to the main trailhead departure points near Chattanooga, Tennessee; and the Benge and Bell routes, two primary long-distance trails that cross six states. Other additions include numerous water and overland trail segments used by groups traveling by boat along major rivers, along with short “dispersal” routes from the ends of the land and river trails to the final settlement destinations.

“Adding these routes to the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail recognizes the complexities of the removal of the Cherokee Indians in 1838-39,” said Superintendent Aaron Mahr of National Trails Intermountain Region, which administers the trail. “It also gives us a comprehensive and more accurate picture of the removal experience, and it certainly brings this tragic event in our nation’s history into sharper focus. We will work closely with many different groups in the private and public sector to help protect trailside sites along these newly designated routes and make them available for public use”

National Trails Intermountain Region, a National Park Service program office with headquarters in Santa Fe, New Mexico, administers the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail, eight other national historic trails, and the historic Route 66 highway corridor. The office coordinates planning, interpretation, and preservation activities along the trails with other federal, state, and local agencies, private landowners, and non-profit organizations.

Designation of national historic trails does not transfer land title to the federal government or otherwise affect landowners’ rights. Landowners are not required to allow public access to their property, to participate in or be associated with the trail, or to be liable for any persons injured while using the trail on their property.

The Trail of Tears National Historic Trail is part of a network of 30 historic and scenic trails, which make up the National Trails System.

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**EDITORS: The Trail of Tears National Historic Trail is now located in North Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee, Alabama, Kentucky, Illinois, Missouri, Arkansas, and Oklahoma. In the recently-passed bill, new trail mileage was added in every state except Illinois.**